



**US Army Corps
of Engineers®**

Seattle District

Notice of Availability

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Public Notice Date: April 29, 2014
Expiration Date: May 14, 2014
Reference: EN-ER-4-29-14
Project Name: Souse Gulch Volunteer Village
Campground, Libby Dam, MT

Interested parties are hereby notified that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Seattle District (Corps) has prepared, pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act, a draft environmental assessment (EA) for a proposed "Volunteer Village" Campground in the Souse Gulch Recreation Area at Libby Dam, Montana. This project would construct full-service RV campsites exclusively for volunteer use to help alleviate the shortage of such campgrounds in the vicinity of Libby Dam.

AUTHORITY

Construction of Libby Dam, Kootenai River, Montana, was authorized by the Flood Control Act of May 17, 1950, 81st Congress (Public Law 81- 516), in accordance with the plan set forth in House Document 531, 81st Congress, Second Session. The project is authorized for multiple uses, including flood control, power generation, recreation, navigation, and fish and wildlife conservation. A new volunteer village campground is intended to fill an existing need for additional full-service camping sites for long-term volunteers working at Libby Dam. It is anticipated that additional volunteer support will allow the Corps to continue to offer visitor services and recreation facilities at Libby Dam in a fiscal climate of increasing budgetary uncertainties.

PROPOSED ACTION

The Corps would construct a full-service volunteer village that would include electrical, water, and sewer hookups for RVs. Each of the up to nine (9) new campsites would include a hardened living area, fire pit, lantern holder, and a picnic table. Once completed and fully operational, the volunteer village would offer full-service camping spots to seasonal volunteers who support Libby Dam facilities and natural resource programs across Corps-administered lands.

Multiple alternatives are under consideration, including the No Action alternative. A similar proposal for a 30-unit public campground was circulated in September 2013; however, since that time construction and long-term operations costs of a public campground were determined not to be cost-effective. The public campground is no longer being considered.

The Corps' preferred alternative is to construct the volunteer village campground in the forested area to the west of the existing Souse Gulch day use access road. The volunteer village would be accessible via paved roads. New paved parking would be added within the existing road loop at the north end of the Souse Gulch Day use area for use by the public and to accommodate any overflow volunteer parking needs. The layout of the proposed utility and camp site alignment is provided in the attached figures.

TIMELINE

The Corps would start tree removal and camp site construction in 2014 and plan to complete construction by winter 2015. Plantings and paving would occur in spring 2016, or as soon as is feasible.

ANTICIPATED IMPACTS

The Corp's preliminary analyses of the principal effects from the full-service campground construction are summarized as follows.

Mortality of approximately 100 mature conifer trees and shrubs would occur within the project site. The project has been designed to avoid native trees to the extent possible, but some trees would have to be removed.

A temporary and localized disruption to wildlife would occur during construction. Some animals may be permanently displaced through the loss of habitat or disturbance from the increased human presence. However, the total wildlife impact is not expected to be significant.

Human use of the area (fishing, camping, dog walking) is expected to increase after project completion. This would have beneficial effects on public recreation and may have minor adverse or minor cumulative effects on aesthetics, utility usage, fish populations, vegetation, wildlife distributions and soil erosion in the immediate area.

The Corps has reviewed the Project to comply with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and found that the Project would adversely affect the historic architectural and landscape character of the Souse Gulch day-use area, a historic property and contributing component to the Libby Dam Historic District. The Corps is has developed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) pursuant to 36 C.F.R. § 800.6 to resolve the adverse effect and meet its responsibilities under Section 106 (Appendix C in draft EA). The Corps intends to implement the stipulations and mitigation measures of the MOA to resolve the adverse effect and reduce the impacts of the proposed action below the threshold of NEPA significance, should it decide to proceed to implement the preferred alternative.

Public land use availability in the Souse Gulch area would be altered slightly. The overall acreage dedicated to day use would decrease and a paved road would be constructed that segregates the day use and camping areas. The Corps would construct less than two (2) acres of increased impervious surface as camping pads and paved roads as a result of the preferred alternative.

Construction, vegetation removal, and ground disturbance from human activities may cause a temporary increase in airborne particulate asbestos that currently is present in the soil, duff and vegetation. All work conducted under this project would be done using appropriate air monitoring, administrative controls, engineering controls and

Personal Protective Equipment consistent with the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) permissible exposure limit for asbestos. Exposure risk thresholds to the type of asbestos present at Souse Gulch have not been established by EPA, but based on the available information to date the Corps anticipates the health risks to visitors would not be significant. The Corps will establish campground maintenance and activity guidelines to minimize any public health risks, if such precautions are determined to be warranted under OSHA.

No in-water work would occur as a result of this project. There are no wetlands present where construction would occur. Thus, no resources protected under the Clean Water Act would be impacted as a result of this project. Lake Koocanusa supports bull trout, listed as threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA). Construction and use of the campground would not result in any significant impacts to ESA species in Lake Koocanusa or in the adjacent forest.

EVALUATION

The Corps has made a preliminary determination that the environmental impacts of the proposal can be adequately evaluated under the National Environmental Policy Act through preparation of an environmental assessment (EA). Based on the information currently available, the Corps believes the proposed full-service campground is not expected to result in significant adverse environmental impacts. The Corps has prepared a draft EA addressing potential environmental impacts associated with the Souse Gulch Campground project. The draft EA is available for public review and comment at the following website:

<http://www.nws.usace.army.mil/Missions/Environmental/EnvironmentalDocuments/2014EnvironmentalDocuments.aspx>

under "Souse Gulch Draft Environmental Assessment".

The Corps invites submission of factual comment on the environmental impact of the proposal. The Corps will consider all submissions received before the expiration date of this notice. The nature or scope of the proposal may be changed upon consideration of the comments received. The Corps will initiate an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), and afford all appropriate public participation opportunities attendant to an EIS, if significant effects on the quality of the human environment are identified and cannot be mitigated.

Submit comments to this office, Attn: Environmental Resources and Cultural Branch, no later than May 14, 2014 to ensure consideration. In addition to sending comments via mail, comments may be e-mailed to rhonda.s.lucas@usace.army.mil. Requests for additional information should be directed to Rhonda Lucas at 206-764-3512 or the above e-mail address.